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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF OREGON
MEDFORD DIVISION

KLAMATH-SISKIYOU WILDLANDS
CENTER, OREGON WILD, CASCADIA
WILDLANDS, and SODA MOUNTAIN
WILDERNESS COUNCIL,

Plaintiffs,

vs.

UNITED STATES BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT,

Defendant.

Civ. Case No. 1:19-cv-02069-CL

**FIRST DECLARATION OF SHANNON
RIO**

I, SHANNON RIO, declare as follows:

1. I am a current member of the Klamath-Siskiyou Wildlands Center.
2. I personally utilize public lands managed by the Ashland Resource Area in the forests in the vicinity of Howard Prairie Lake to look for and enjoy native birds.

3. I have been a nature educator for seven years and have studied various subjects in ornithology for the last forty years.

4. I have created an education program called “Talk and Walks,” structured as a classroom learning session and followed by a day in nature looking for birds. In the last six to seven years, I have personally offered roughly forty “Talk and Walks” events. Of those I have offered, at least six have specifically focused on the great gray owls living in the vicinity of Howard Prairie Lake. Howard Prairie area is rich in bird life, specifically great gray owls.

5. Great gray owls are of particular interest to birders and recreationalists because of their elusive and wild nature. A sighting of this bird consistently wows people. In my “Talk and Walks” events, I have had people express to me, when they see this bird for the first or second or third time, that it changes their lives.

6. The great gray owl is wild and cryptic, sometimes called “The Phantom of the Forest.” Searching for a great gray owl in nature requires tactful and intentional birding. While pursuing a view of these owls, the odds are against you: their dark brown and spotted feathers blend into the forests, leaving a successful birder feeling rewarded, fulfilled, and with a vested interest in the habitat in which they observed the owl.

7. I distinctly and wholeheartedly value the habitat for great gray owls that is provided by BLM-managed forests. I have visited these forests approximately once a week for two years regularly seeking great gray owls, and sometimes being lucky enough to see them. In the last year, I have had knee surgery and have had to miss some weekly trips searching for great gray owls. In the last year, I have made it out to visit these particular forests in pursuit of great gray owls approximately forty times, and expect to visit more often as my knee heals from my surgery

8. Through my consistent search for these owls in nature, I have developed knowledge of their preferred habitat and have led “Talk and Walks” in a specific loop including areas of Keno Access Road around Howard Prairie Lake.

9. I have personally invested money on a scope, binoculars, and camera to advance sighting opportunities.

10. I consider myself a citizen scientist in that I collect data on birds and channel that information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology through their eBird website. THE CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY, *eBird*, <https://ebird.org/home> (last visited February 26, 2020). This information helps determine if birds are diminishing due to climate change, habitat loss, or other reasons.

11. I have started and continue to steward the “Talk and Walks” program because it connects people to nature in a way that encourages them to give back to their communities and the forest environment. After seeing a great gray owl, people are deeply affected and are able to understand how habitat and conditions allow for such a majestic experience.

12. I would be directly and negatively affected as a recreationalist and as a nature educator if the BLM were to remove great gray owl habitat or harm great gray owls in the vicinity of Howard Prairie Lake. I fear that if the area proposed for logging were actually logged, it will adversely affect these birds who are known to nest and feed their young in such areas, likely compelling them to leave the area. I have seen these owls in this area and I will be directly injured if owl nesting habitat sites are disturbed as prescribed in the Griffin Half Moon timber sale.

Dated this 10th day of March, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Shannon Rio
Shannon Rio